



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF ILLINOIS

**Lisa Madigan**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

OCT 30 2015

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October 30, 2015

RE: Illinois Automated Victim Notification (AVN) System - 2015 Status

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Legislature:

The Crime Victim and Witness Notification Advisory Committee (AVN Committee) was created in 1999 to assist the Office of the Illinois Attorney General in the implementation of the Illinois Automated Victim Notification System (AVN system). [725 ILCS 120/8.5 (g)]. The AVN Committee is charged with evaluating the operation of the system and reporting its activities and status to the General Assembly each year. As Chairman of the AVN Committee, I am pleased to provide you with this update on the operation and enhancement of the Illinois AVN system.

**The Illinois AVN System Basics**

The Illinois Automated Victim Notification System provides information about changes in an offender's custodial status and court case status. Victims, witnesses, family members, law enforcement officers, probation officers, and interested members of the public can request bilingual (English/Spanish) telephone, email or text notifications. The service is free to users and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Illinois AVN is a critical element in ensuring that law enforcement officials, the Department of Corrections (DOC), and prosecutors fulfill their constitutional and statutory mandates to notify victims of changes in an offender's custodial status and upcoming court dates. [See Article I, Section 8.1 (a) of the Illinois Constitution, delineating the rights of crime victims, and the implementation legislation contained in the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act, 725 ILCS 120/4 and 4.5]. Law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates can be given special access to the system, affording them the opportunity to further assist victims.

The Illinois AVN system provides these valuable notifications via a computer interface with county jail booking systems, the Illinois Department of Corrections, circuit court clerks, and selected Department of Mental Health facilities throughout the state. The Illinois AVN system transfers information from these sources to a centralized communication center, which in turn, generates timely telephone, email or text message updates to any individual who is a registered user of the system. Presently there are 87 jails, 95 court systems, seven facilities in the Illinois Department of Mental Health, and the Illinois Department of Corrections participating in AVN. The Illinois Department of Mental Health provides notifications related to offenders who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity or who have been found to be sexually violent or sexually dangerous persons. The

notifications mandated by the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act include notices that the offenders in DHS custody have been released on and returned from an off-grounds pass and notice when the offender is conditionally released, dies, or escapes. DHS notifications are provided only to victims as specified by statute.

The registration process for the Illinois AVN system is relatively simple. Victims, witnesses and other interested parties call a toll-free number: 1-866-5-NOTIFY (1866-566-8439), (TTY-I-877-502-2423), or register online at [www.vinelink.com](http://www.vinelink.com) (commonly referred to as "VINELink"). A mobile phone application (VINEMobile) is now available to ensure community members are safe and informed with up-to-date offender status notifications on a 24 hours basis. This mobile application serves as additional avenue of communication of information and registration for the state's citizenry. The toll-free telephone registration and notifications as well as the email and text message notifications are available in English and Spanish. Victim advocates assist many victims with registration.

Users who register for phone notification are required to select a four-digit Personal Identification Number (PIN), which allows the Illinois AVN system to monitor when the intended recipient has received the requested notification. If the correct PIN is not entered at the time of the call, the system will continue to attempt to make notification calls as often as every 30 minutes for 24 hours, allowing the user to correct their PIN entry. At any point in the process, users may connect to a live operator for assistance. All e-mail and text message notifications are sent to an email or phone number selected by the user.

In addition, law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates can request access to a restricted area of the AVN system. This restricted part of the system, referred to as "VINEWatch," allows criminal justice personnel and victim advocates to register victims, update registrations, run registration and notification reports, prepare statistical AVN usage reports, conduct emergency override procedures, and conduct offender and case searches.

Since its implementation in 2001, the Illinois AVN system has provided information to 862,653 registered users. Searches for court and custody information have totaled 7,392,601. As of October 15, 2015, the Illinois AVN system has access to custody information for 121,077 offenders and case status information for over 914,548 open criminal court cases. As of October 15, 2015, there were 366,529 active registered users. During fiscal year 2015, the system provided 1,981,048 telephonic notifications, 265,897 email notifications and 98,849 text message notifications. As noted earlier, this service is completely secure and free-of-charge to the users. Public Act 98-0717, effective January 1, 2015, prohibits the Office of the Attorney General from releasing names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of those who register with the AVN system, thereby ensuring the victim's anonymity and safety.

As with any technology, improvements and upgrades are critical to maintain a robust system. Over the years, the Attorney General's Office utilized federal grant money to add the text messaging system (2011), upgrade the interfaces to 29 county systems (2012), and add DHS to the system (2012). VINEMobile was added in 2013 and the VINELink website was redesigned in September 2015.

### **On-going AVN Operational Costs**

The operating costs for the current AVN system are disbursed from the Violent Crime Victims Assistance fund. The Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act imposes a fine on persons convicted of

criminal offenses and certain offenses listed in the Illinois Vehicle Code. These fines are deposited in the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Fund, which is used to fund the AVN system and also serves as a source of grant funding for programs that provide services to crime victims. [725 ILCS 240/1 et. seq.]

### **Continued Benefits**

The AVN System is an efficient, cost-effective tool that we can use to help insure the safety of crime victims. It has been a great success, as evidenced by the increase in the number of victims who use the system. AVN also serves as a valuable resource to assist law enforcement, prosecutors, and court personnel as they carry out their constitutional and statutory duties to notify victims of changes in an offender's custody status and upcoming court dates.

To ensure the public is aware of this valuable service, staff from Attorney General Lisa Madigan's Office provides training to agency users on the features and benefits of the Illinois AVN system. Training and a fact sheet on VINEWatch are available to law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates. In addition, the Attorney General's staff distributes brochures, fact sheets, and other materials about the system to interested parties throughout the state.

If you have any questions about the existing Illinois AVN system and its new enhancements, or would like additional information about how this system effectively serves the victims and witnesses of violent crime in your district, please do not hesitate to contact Kathy Carroll at 312-814-3683 or Cynthia Hora at 312-814-1427 of the Attorney General's Office.

On behalf of the AVN Committee, we thank Attorney General Madigan for providing this invaluable service to the citizens of Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Sullivan".

Mr. Greg Sullivan  
Chairman,  
Crime Victim and Witness Notification Advisory Committee